United Nations

Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council votes to ban military flights over Bosnia and Herzegovina except for United Nations flights.

+ Investigations into alleged fraud in elections in Angola continue; Secretary-General's Special Representative for Angola holds separate meetings with President Dos Santos and UNITA leader Savimbi.

+ American civilian taken by Iraqi authorities on Kuwaiti side of demilitarized zone; United Nations attempts to secure his release.

+ Yasushi Akashi, Secretary-General's Special Representative for Cambodia, says despite some difficulties United Nations is determined to adhere to timetable set for free and fair elections in that country by next May.

+ Immediate crisis in Abkhazia partly due to widespread sabotage and looting in Abkhazia and western Georgia since early this year, according to Secretary-General's report, adopted by Security Council yesterday.

+ Next team of inspectors scheduled to go to Iraq on 16 October; over $10 million pledged for United Nations Guards contingents in Iraq.

+ Russian Federation and Baltic States discuss situation of Russian minorites in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania.

+ General Assembly will hold four special plenary meetings on Monday and Tuesday, 12 and 13 October, to mark conclusion of United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992).

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Alarmed at the continuation of military flights over the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Security Council decided today to impose a ban on such flights in the airspace of that country, and requested the United Nations

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Protection Force (UNPROFOR) to monitor compliance with the ban, including the placement of observers where necessary at the air fields in the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

The Council's action came at a formal meeting this afternoon, when it adopted resolution 781 (1992) by a vote of 14 in favour to none against, with one abstention (China). The ban does not apply to UNPROFOR flights or other flights in support of United Nations operations, including humanitarian assistance. The Council called on all States to take all measures necessary to provide assistance to UNPROFOR, based on technical monitoring and other capabilities and it asked the Secretary-General to report to it on a periodic basis on the implementation of the resolution. It also said it would "consider urgently the further measures necessary" to enforce the ban on military flights in the case of violations.

Today's resolution comes one day after Muhamed Sacirbey, the Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina, called for enforcement of the "no-fly zone", which was agreed to by all the parties to the Bosnian conflict at the London Conference. Following today's decision, United States Ambassador Edward Perkins said that if the current resolution were violated, his Government would move to seek adoption by the Council of a further resolution mandating enforcement of a no-fly zone over Bosnia and Herzegovina. Speaking to correspondents after the meeting, United Kingdom Ambassador, Sir David Hannay, said the interdiction would start immediately. He said the Council was "not in the mood to permit innocent civilians to be bombed by aeroplanes by any party at all".

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Investigations into alleged fraud in elections in Angola were continuing, and the announcement whether they had been free and fair would be delayed for a few days, a United Nations official told correspondents today. The Secretary-General's Special Representative for Angola, Margaret Anstee, had met with President Dos Santos this morning and would meet with UNITA leader Savimbi this afternoon, he said.

Meanwhile, with the lack of acceptance of the results of Angola's elections of 29 and 30 September, the Angolan Foreign Minister, Pedro Castro Van Dunem, told last night correspondents at Headquarters that the Ad Hoc Commission being sent to that country by the United Nations was an important sign that the Organization was continuing to back Angola's efforts towards democratization.

Mr. Van Dunem, who had just concluded talks with the Secretary-General, said the threat of war was serious but stressed that it would be difficult for the leader of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) to carry out his threats, as there would be no more assistance from the international community. The Secretary-General has promised the full support of the United Nations in finding a solution to the crisis.

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Last Wednesday, the Security Council, concerned at reports that one of the parties was contesting the outcome of the elections, decided to send the Ad Hoc Commission to Angola to support the implementation of the peace Agreements. A note by Council President Jean-Bernard Merimée of France issued today said Council members had agreed that the Commission should comprise the representatives of Cape Verde, Morocco, the Russian Federation and the United States.

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An American civilian, Chad Hall, was taken by Iraqi authorities on the Kuwaiti side of the demilitarized zone between Kuwait and Iraq, yesterday, in an area near Camp Khor.

According to a statement issued at Headquarters today, the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) immediately requested the release of Mr. Hall from the Iraqi authorities in Baghdad. The matter was also raised today at Headquarters with the Iraqi Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

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Yasushi Akashi, the Secretary-General's Special Representative to Cambodia told correspondents today that the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) was determined to adhere to the timetable set for free and fair elections in that country by May of next year, despite some difficulties. UNTAC had experienced one major delay in its operations, he said, which was the refusal by Democratic Kampuchea to cooperate with UNTAC with regard to Phase II of the implementation of the Paris Accords, involving the regroupment, cantonment, disarmament and demobilization of the four armed Cambodian factions.

UNTAC could not proceed very far with its disarmament activities because of Democratic Kampuchea's refusal to cooperate, Mr. Akashi said, adding that in the weeks to come, there will be increasing focus on this problem. In the past three days, he had participated in informal discussions undertaken by the two Co-Chairmen of the Paris Conference (France and Indonesia) and the permanent five Security Council Members, in preparation for a Council meeting next week on the issue. There was a consensus of view that the United Nations should adhere to the plan of action leading to free and fair elections next spring, and that no party should be excluded, he stressed.

The electoral law was promulgated by UNTAC after four months of negotiations with the Cambodian parties, and, since 5 October, the registration of voters had started in Phnom Penh without incident, explained Mr. Akashi, adding that UNTAC intended to complete that process by 31 December.

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The immediate crisis in Abkhazia could be attributed to the widespread sabotage and looting in Abkhazia and western Georgia since early this year,

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resulting in loss of millions of roubles and a deterioration of Georgia's relations with the Russian Federation, its main trading partner, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

That was one of the conclusions contained in his report to the Security Council on recent developments in Georgia, on the basis of the visit to the area of a goodwill mission, from 12 to 20 September this year. According to the report, dated 7 October, the Abkhaz Supreme Soviet, in the absence of the Georgian representatives, had in August 1990 declared Abkhazia a sovereign republic of the Soviet Union. That move was immediately annulled by the Georgian Supreme Soviet.

In his review of the situation, the Secretary-General wrote that when in mid-1992, the Government of Georgia concluded that the police was unable to control the ongoing sabotage and looting, it decided to send some 2,000 Georgian troops to Abkhazia for the announced purpose of protecting the railway and other communication links. The President of the State Council of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, had emphasized that it was the sovereign right of the Republic of Georgia to relocate troops within its territory. He told the mission that he had told the Abkhaz leader about these arrangements.

Fierce fighting broke out when the Georgian troops entered Abkhazia on 14 August this year, resulting in some 200 dead and hundreds of wounded. Moreover, up to 40,000 people of various ethnic origins in Abkhazia became refugees and displaced persons.

Supported by the Council's action yesterday, the Secretary-General will now send a high-level mission to Georgia, following that country's request. The mission will explore ways in which the United Nations can support implementation of the Moscow agreement of 3 September, including the deployment of civilian and/or military observers. The mission will include several observers who will remain on the spot in order to provide an initial United Nations presence.

The Moscow agreement signed by President Yeltsin and Mr. Shevardnadze and agreed to by the leadership of Abkhazia, ensures the territorial integrity of Georgia, provides for a cease-fire and establishes a Monitoring and Inspection Commission composed of representatives of the three parties, among other things. The leader of Abkhazia told the mission that he had been forced to sign the agreement and accused Georgia of continuing to violate the agreement. He contended the Georgian troops were still involved in attacking civilians as well as in widespread looting.

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A United Nations official confirmed today that there had been an exchange of letters between the Iraqi Government and the Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament concerning the next team of inspectors scheduled to go to Iraq on 16 October. The team will be led by Nikita Smidovich, a Russian member of the United Nations, and will comprise about 50 people from 10 different nations with more than one expertise within the team.

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In a separate development, the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs announced yesterday that additional pledges of over $10 million have recently been made for the United Nations Guards contingent in Iraq. These include offers of cash contributions of $578,000 by the Netherlands, $327,000 by Luxembourg, $6.5 million by the United States, $1 million by the Commission of the European Communities and $2 million by Japan.

At present, 108 Guards are deployed in Baghdad and in the northern governorates of Iraq. Under the terms of the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Programme for Iraq, their role consists of providing protection to all staff working under the Programme equipment ansd supplies. Following the recent pledges, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs is expecting an imminent increase in the size of the contingent.

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The issue of the protection of minorities in new sovereign States was raised yesterday afternoon in the General Assembly's Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural), as it continued its debate on racism and racial discrimination and the right to self-determination.

The Representative of the Russian Federation told Committee members that 25 million people of Russian extraction now found themselves as national minorities in new sovereign States, and hundreds of thousands of them in Latvia and Estonia had been excluded from the political life of those countries. While the Government in Estonia had stressed that its State authorities acted in full compliance with the existing Constitution, he said, one must remember that Nazi repression, the practice of apartheid and the persecution of dissidents in former socialist countries had all been done in strict accordance with effective laws.

The representative of Latvia, speaking also on behalf of the Baltic States of Estonia and Latvia, said that considering the volatility of the transition period to independence and the demographic legacy of 50 years of Soviet occupation, the Baltic States had done remarkably well in managing their diverse population. He added that a mistaken perception had been created that those who had lost their privileges were now being discriminated against.

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The General Assembly will hold four special plenary meetings on Monday and Tuesday, 12 and 13 October, to mark the conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992).

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Assembly's President Stoyan Ganev of Bulgaria will address delegates and special guests, followed by representatives of the five regional groups. Representatives from seven non-governmental organizations that have been particularly active in promoting the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons will also take the floor on this occasion.

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